



Appleby Archaeology

Summer 2004

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Crowdundle Beck Bloomery

Five interested members made their way on a warm May evening to the site which lies next to the Crowdundle Beck, the old boundary between the counties of Westmorland and Cumberland. It was first recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record in 1995 after Barbara Blenkinship visited the site and found it seriously eroded by the beck; her interest was awakened by the then owner of the land referring to the 'old smelter' so she set off to find it. The SMR describes the site as 'as good example of a bloomery and is relatively large and complex by North Pennines standards. M Davies-Shiel interprets it as being water-powered and of C17 date but David Cranstone of English Heritage, suggests the site is an unpowered streamside bloomery with a possible Medieval date'. The site consists of two substantial mounds covered with vegetation and small gorse bushes and one of the mounds has been cut into by the beck exposing a stratigraphy of clay, charcoal and slag. There is a further low area of slag with little vegetation on which could have been the site of a furnace. Possibly associated with the site are several low dry platforms and a possible leet. Fuel for the furnace probably came from coppiced woodland which survives around and downstream of the site.

Mike Davies-Shiel is convinced that the site is a water-powered bloomery built by a famed Ironmaster one William Wright in 1667 reputedly at 'Bleacarn,' and he has identified a Hematite vein on Red Carle, an iron mine high up on Middle Tongue and a Geothite (hydrous iron oxide containing up to c62.9% iron) mine higher up on the Crowdundle Beck.

However, such is the hope of archaeologists that a possible Medieval or even a Roman date (the Maiden Way passes within 2km), has not been ruled out!

Harry Hawkins

Fieldwork Update

Members have been active this summer investigating archaeological features on the fellside near Kirkland. The first stage of fieldwork has focused on the two potash-pits located by the group last year and included recording the sites using metric survey to produce plans and profiles.

We also invited Mike Davies-Shiel along to visit the sites. Mike is an amateur archaeologist who specializes in industrial archaeology and he was able to provide valuable information about rural industries including the production of potash.

A full report on these features will be included in the next edition of the newsletter. The next stage of survey will be to investigate the numerous banks and enclosures which have been identified. Full training is given and participation is open to all members of the group.

For details please telephone Harry Hawkins on 01768 864340.

Fieldworkers please note there will be no meeting in July



Using a Level to survey earthworks
(above)

Measuring and drawing a plan of a potash pit (below)



Contents:

- PAGE 2: Hebridean Tour
- PAGE 3: Penrith Museum Visit
- PAGE 4: Summer Events

Hebridean Tour with Janet Niepokojezycka

At the last meeting of their winter session members of the Appleby Archaeology group were transported to the Hebridean Islands of Colonsay and Ornsay. The speaker, Janet Niepokojezycka, who was closely involved with the archaeology group Search, has visited the islands many times and her enchantment with them was evident. The islands lie at the entrance to the Firth of Lorn and are linked by a narrow causeway which becomes dry at low water. Mull is to the north, Islay to the south and Jura to the east but on the west they are exposed to the full force of the Atlantic gales.

Using beautiful slides and a map Janet Niepokojezycka, took the group on a circular tour of the islands pointing out their many attractions including beautiful deserted beaches and many varieties of wild flowers and sea birds. The islands have a strong oral tradition and tales and legends were referred to during our tour. As we journeyed our attention was drawn to the archaeological and historical sites which span 9000 years from the Mesolithic period to the present day.

In the Mesolithic period the islands were part of mainland Scotland and hunter gatherers visited the area to use the resources of the sea as evidenced by "shell mounds" that is to say layers of rubbish, mainly of limpet shells. In some of the mounds stone and bone tools have been found. Recent excavations have found traces of hearths and of a Mesolithic round house. No settlements from the Neolithic period (c.4000-2000BC) have been recorded but hut circles and field systems have been identified indicating Bronze Age (c.2500-

600BC) activity. Perhaps more dramatic are the standing stones. The two most impressive are known as "Fingal's Limpet Hammers" which stand on a raised beach on the west coast.

The islands have many Iron Age (c.600BC-400AD) fortifications. These fall into two categories, forts and duns. The forts are the larger and enclose greater areas of land but both tend to be built on high ground or on promontories. One small dun with a name meaning "dun of the biting wind", is now the second tee of the golf course. These fortifications may have been reused by the Vikings who were present on the islands in the 9th-10th centuries and who left evidence of their two main forms of graves, long cists and enclosures. The enclosure of upright stones at one site was covered by a boat. Iron age pottery and many Scandinavian artefacts have been found.

There is evidence supporting the early presence of Christianity on the islands. A 7th century cross with a large human face carved on the top arm can now be seen in the gardens of Colonsay House and across the islands the remains of dry stone chapels have been found. Legend says that St Columba visited Ornsay and founded a priory. There are certainly ruins of a priory on the island but it was founded by the Augustinians in the 14th century and dedicated to St Columba. The building is of sandstone and schist with the monastic range to the north of the church. The walled garden of the present day farm may have been the site of the priory garden. A number of monumental sculptures can be seen which include carved grave slabs and the Ornsay Cross which is

over 3 metres high, intricately carved and dated to the 15th century. In those days the islands lay within the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles. Later the islands were leased to the Macfies and subsequently to the McNeills until 1904 when the line died out and the islands were bought by Lord Strathcona. A number of monuments record the clan history as do tales of murder and intrigue.

On the journey round the islands more recent buildings were pointed out. Colonsay House built in 1722 is the largest domestic building on the Islands. Ruined townships of the 18th and 19th centuries and remains of sheilings are seen across the islands. The cottages had areas for storage, animals and domestic use but no chimneys. Some are examples of the traditional "Black House". At the ruined fishing village Raisig Buidhe some had had chimneied fireplaces added. A feature of the larger 19th century farmsteads is the octagonal horse gang or engine house attached to the barn where the animals provided the energy for activities such as threshing and milling. Today the islands are geared to the holiday maker and offer visitors a variety of accommodation and activities.

Janet Niepokojezycka concluded her talk with a series of slides showing the standing stones as she read poems she had written about the mystery of the stones and the beauty of Islands.

PS I found further interesting details of the archaeology of the islands on :

www.colonsay.org.uk/history

Phyllis Rouston

Group visit to Penrith Museum

A viciously pointed rapier-like sword wielded by Dr Sydney Chapman, curator of Penrith Museum, ensured the close attention of seventeen members of Appleby Archaeology Group when they made a privileged after-hours visit to the museum's Midglegate premises on 10th Feb. The sword is believed to be a relic of the Jacobite rebellion, possibly abandoned when the fleeing Scots staged a covering defence against the pursuing forces of the Duke of Cumberland at the battle of Clifton Moor – often described as the last battle ever fought on English soil. Dr Chapman had unearthed the rapier from the storeroom used to hold articles that cannot be displayed through lack of space. He proceeded to retrieve a series of similar treasures throughout the evening.

The visit had been arranged as a return match for Dr Chapman's previous assistance at the Group's highly successful Artefacts Day last summer. On this occasion members of the public were invited to bring in finds for expert identification. Dr Chapman's erudition and the temporary display which he provided generated such a level of interest that members asked whether they might make an evening visit to the museum, to hear something about its history and obtain a "behind the scenes" view of how it operates.

Dr Chapman explained that Penrith has had a museum ever since 1883 when the first collection was established in the old Working Men's Reading Room in Hunter Lane. This was based upon the collection of geological

specimens donated by Admiral Robert Wauchope of Dacre Lodge, near Penrith. At this time it was held that the purpose of a museum was to entertain and to amuse. Other donations at this time included "A Box of Beetles from Brazil" (May 1884) and "A Mexican Silver Dollar" (July 1885). Penrith is believed to have been the first town in Cumbria to possess such a public museum. Subsequently the collection was relocated to the old Penrith Town Hall and after a short spell of closure moved to the Robinson School premises in 1984, initially as a temporary exhibition. The school had previously operated for over 300 years with the support of a benefaction from the will of William Robinson of Grub Street, London. The terms of this direct that part of the income from his London properties should be used to help provide free education in Penrith. Following closure of the school it was felt that the aim of the newly reformed museum, namely: "to represent the historical environment and cultural development of Penrith and the Eden District" would help ensure continuance of this objective. The extended and refurbished museum was fully reopened in its new premises in 1990. Since that time the museum, operating in partnership with the adjacent Tourist Information Centre, has flourished, with many additions to the collection and a programme of popular temporary exhibits.

Dr Chapman explained that the Penrith area was almost unique in Cumbria in terms of its dense association with Celtic references. The Eden Valley District likewise is full of unusual features and he suggested that these are best interpreted through a local museum display. As an example he showed members the

memorabilia held by the museum relating to the career of Trooper William Pearson, born in Penrith in 1826, who took part in the Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854. The tale which accompanied these items, namely of a fellow Penrithian who had his epaulettes shot away while remounting a riderless horse to replace the one which had just been killed beneath him, lent an immediacy to what might otherwise have been interesting but impersonal history. "Imagine", he said, "if the Luck of Eden hall" [author's note : a mysterious chalice of Syrian origin associated with the Musgrave family and featuring in many Eden Valley songs and legends] "could be displayed locally here in Penrith rather than its present anonymous location in a glass cabinet in the Victoria and Albert Museum". Perhaps there is a case here for our own local version of a "Bring back the Elgin Marbles" campaign.

Dr Chapman was thanked for an entertaining and stimulating talk, quite in the tradition of the original Working Men's museum, and members of the Archaeology Group were invited to view the museum's permanent displays under their own steam.

Martin Joyce



Carved stone from Little Meg

SUMMER PROGRAMME

BURTON HALL With Niall Hammond

10.30am Sat 7th August
Warcop Army Range

A special visit has been arranged for members of Appleby Archaeology Group and the Matterdale Society led by the MOD Archaeologist Niall Hammond (formerly County Archaeologist for Durham). This will include access to sites on the Warcop Army Range including Burton Hall. This is a rare opportunity as access to the range is restricted.

Names have to be submitted in advance for security reasons so please contact our Chairman Harry Hawkins if you wish to come on 01768 8642340 or Email:
101503.673@compuserve.com
Please bring stout footwear, waterproofs and lunch.

TALK: Mining on the Eastern Fellside With Ian Tyler 7.30pm Tue 14th Sept Supper Room, Market Hall Appleby

The first talk of the Autumn season will be by Ian Tyler of the Threlkeld Mining Museum. Ian is an expert on industrial archaeology and will be focusing on mining activity on the eastern fellside.

All Appleby Archaeology Group talks are open to the public (admission charge £1.50) and are Free to members. New members joining from October get the following years subscription included for free!



National Archaeology Days 2004 17th and 18th July

The dates for the National Archaeology Days for 2004 are 17.7.04-18.7.04. Events will be held across the uk. For further information contact Jan Cox, Marketing Officer, Council for British Archaeology, Bowes Morrell House, 111 Walmgate, York YO1 9WA, tel 01904 671417 or email: nad@britarch.ac.uk

Programme for Autumn 2004:

- 12 October 2004. "Polesworth: A Country Pottery in Northern Warwickshire", Dr Nigel Melton.
- 9 November.. "Cumbrian Villages: Their Origins and National Importance".. Professor Brian Roberts.
- 14 December 2004. "A Group of Pre-Conquest Ironwork from Asby Winderwath Common", Ben Edwards. (Ex-County Archaeologist for Lancashire).

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